Washington Square Park Youth Forum

The Legacy of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara

When Lenin opined, "After their death, attempts are made to turn them into harmless icons, canonize them, and surround their names with a certain halo for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping them," he was of course writing of a trend in any period of where there is a division of class, of the possessing few over the producing many.

However, in recent history, there is perhaps no greater example than the abuse of the image of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Ernesto "Che" Guevara's likeness is ubiquitous, not necessarily a bad thing, but what he stood for has been lost. Where a Che shirt might be donned by a burgeoning revolutionary, it may just as easily be worn by someone with no knowledge of who he was and what he did, or worn by someone intending the use as a slur or accompanied with a slur.

Ernesto "Che" Guevara was a revolutionary, an Argentinean and a Cuban who was assassinated by the CIA in Bolivia. In a sense, he belongs to the worldwide movement for liberation and ultimately socialism.

That Target earlier this year decided to use the likeness of the great internationalist and Marxist, though the retailer caved into pressure from the right, is a great vulgarization that the retail giant would consider putting Che's visage on CD cases.

We simply cannot allow Che to continue to be used by capitalism and made into a "harmless icon. As the Cubans do, we must elevate the ideas of Che, like those of all the revolutionary thinkers.

Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) is hosting a workshop in Washington Square Park on the Legacy of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. More than merely a history lesson, it is a presentation and dialogue on building an anti-imperialist movement from the perspective of youth. And, there are few examples in this respect greater than Che.

It is important, now especially, as capitalism finds itself in an increasingly dire crisis, for youth to take part in building an anti-imperialist movement.

In the U.S. conditions continue to get worse. Ten million of the 17 million youth between the ages of 16-19 years of age have dropped out of the workforce. While the jobless rate gives the illusion of being low, it does not account for the millions that have given up the search for work. The trend is especially true for Black, Latino and indigenous youth. The jobless rate for Black people in general has consistently been in the double digits. In the inner cities and on reservations it is above 20%, above 40% for young Black men in New York City.

Higher education, healthcare, employment, all these things grow further out of reach for workers, the poor and more so for oppressed nationalities and even more so for undocumented workers and their families. Youth have few opportunities save the military, the cops, jail or prisons. The option of police and/or military service, of course, is to the detriment of the poor and oppressed at home and abroad be it by direct military invasion and occupation or neo-liberal economic policies or police occupation of oppressed communities in the U.S.

More than ever, as conditions will deepen, and the protectors of the capitalist mode of production grow madder to perpetuate the status quo, we need a multi-national youth movement in solidarity with the most oppressed at home and abroad, with leadership from the most oppressed in this country, one dedicated to being in the streets and fighting for a better world.

Tyneisha Bowen, Laura Bickford, LeiLani Dowell and Larry Hales

About FIST:

FIST - Fight Imperialism, Stand Together—a group of young activists who fight the racism, sexism, LGBT oppression, and working class exploitation that are the results of imperialism and capitalism. We believe that the only way to achieve true liberation for all peoples throughout the world is through socialism.

From the anti-war movement, to struggles against police brutality, bigotry, globalization, and more, youth have played a decisive role in all progressive social movements. We are living in a time when the need for a revolutionary movement, especially among youth, is stronger than ever.

Youth are being forced to kill and die in a criminal war against the Iraqi people. The possibility of finding a job with decent wages and benefits is getting slimmer all the time.
The number of youth, particularly youth of color, being brutalized by the police and locked in prison grows larger every day. Tuition is skyrocketing at universities all over the country, making it impossible for youth to get an education without incurring a huge amount of debt.

It's time for youth to organize and build the type of society that puts people's needs first. F.I.S.T is dedicated to achieving such a society by building a multinational, multigendered organization of revolutionary youth.

FIST stands with all youth who are engaged in struggle against imperialism in all of their forms. The solution for youth is not in the voting booth, it's in the streets!

Che's Living legacy of Internationalism:

A Guide for the Antiwar Movement

Fri. Nov.16

3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Washington Square Park

Email: fist@workers.org **212.627.2994**

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